

Grants Will Help Repair Schools, Rebuild Parks, Remove Debris, and Reimburse State for Sheltering Costs

February 19th, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (LA-03) announced today that Jefferson Parish, St. Bernard Parish and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals will receive \$15,923,460.30 in federal disaster grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The grants will reimburse St. Bernard and Jefferson Parishes for removing debris, repairing schools, and rebuilding recreation facilities. They will also reimburse the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals for some of the costs of providing emergency sheltering and medical services during Hurricane Katrina.

"Three and a half years have passed since Hurricane Katrina, yet the recovery is far from complete." said Rep. Melancon. "We still have projects to finish and bills that need to be paid, and it is important that our local parish governments and state agencies continue to be reimbursed for their commitment to rebuilding south Louisiana. Federal grants like those announced today help support their commitment and move storm-damaged communities further along the path to a full recovery."

The following federal grants were announced today:

- **\$1,405,056.00 for storm debris removal (St. Bernard Parish).** Storm surge and flooding from Hurricane Katrina, along with wind borne debris driven by hurricane-force winds, caused extensive damage to structures throughout St. Bernard Parish. The accumulation of disaster-related debris constituted a threat to public health and safety and required removal. FEMA and the Parish estimated that 500 commercial structures containing asbestos required removal. The grant version announced today expands the scope of the work that will be reimbursed and increases the grant amount to more accurately reflect the costs incurred by the Parish for removing the asbestos from the commercial buildings. Project worksheet number 17587-1.
- **\$2,593,691.66 for project management of school facility repairs (Jefferson Parish).** Hurricane Katrina caused extensive damage to schools throughout Jefferson Parish. Previously, FEMA required separate project worksheets for each school. As a result of pressure from the Louisiana Congressional delegation and state and local elected officials, Congress passed legislation in 2007 requiring FEMA to revise that policy and permit school districts to submit consolidated project worksheets covering multiple schools. The grant announced today is an estimate of anticipated project management costs for repairing multiple schools and facilities located throughout Jefferson Parish. The Parish will be required to document project management costs on a project-by-project basis, but funding will be consolidated into one project worksheet, reducing paperwork for the Parish and simplifying the reimbursement

process. Project worksheet number 18383-0.

- **\$8,714,766.24 for Val Reiss Park recreational facility repairs (St. Bernard Parish).**

Storm surges and flooding from levee breaches caused by Hurricane Katrina damaged recreational facilities throughout St. Bernard Parish. A total of 31 project worksheets were written for repairs to recreational facilities throughout St. Bernard Parish. This grant consolidates all 31 project worksheets into one PW for Val Reiss Park. Project worksheet number 18384-0.

- **\$2,191,866.40 for emergency shelter costs (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health)** During Hurricane Katrina, a mandatory evacuation of the general population and special needs individuals was ordered. Seven special needs shelters were opened throughout the state by the Office of Public Health (a division of DHH) to provide emergency medical and health services. The Office of Public Health also provided personnel and supplies to the shelters that were located at the Superdome, Nicholls State University in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana State University, and the Med-Evac Program located at the Louis Armstrong Airport. This grant will reimburse DHH for labor costs for evacuation and sheltering during and after Hurricane Katrina. Project worksheet number 18395-0.

- **\$1,018,080.00 Ambulance Services for Plaquemines Parish (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals).** This grant reimburses DHH for the cost of providing ambulance services to Plaquemines Parish during and immediately following Hurricane Katrina. Project worksheet number 18339-0.

Rep. Melancon has worked in Congress to further reduce the financial burden on local governments in south Louisiana still struggling to recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. After the storms, he worked with the Louisiana delegation and Congressional leadership to waive the 10 percent local match requirement for disaster recovery projects and allow federal Community Disaster Loans to be forgiven for localities that can not afford to repay them.

Under the federal Robert T. Stafford Act, public assistance projects like those announced today required a 10 percent cost share from local governments upfront before the remaining 90 percent in federal grant money can be used. Many of the estimated 23,000 disaster recovery projects in Louisiana had been put on hold because local governments did not have the resources to provide the match. The local match requirement has been waived 32 times since 1985 when per capita rebuilding costs have been deemed excessive, but had not yet been waived for Katrina and Rita.

Rep. Melancon worked with House leadership to include the waiver of the 10% match in the Iraq/Katrina Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President at the end of May. This bill provides a total of \$6.419 billion in hurricane recovery and relief funding for Louisiana and other Gulf Coast states.

In addition, Rep. Melancon successfully lobbied House leadership to include language in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill making Katrina- and Rita-affected communities eligible for forgiveness of their Community Disaster Loans. An estimated \$1 billion in CDL's were provided by the federal government to hurricane-affected local governments immediately following Katrina and Rita to help them continue daily operations, such as payroll for law enforcement and emergency responders. Many local governments do not have the ability to repay this massive debt, as their tax bases were devastated by the storms. Rep. Melancon argued that, in the past, CDL's have been forgiven following many other major disasters, including Hurricane Andrew and the September 11th terrorist attacks. With the passage of the Supplemental, Katrina and Rita CDL's became eligible for forgiveness, taking a huge financial burden off of local governments in south Louisiana.

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